

NEVER PUT THE ZA'ATAR
BEFORE THE OIL

AXELLE KURBAN

Never Put the Za'atar
Before the Oil:
A Visual Recollection
of Memories

Axelle Kurban



“Never put the za’atar before the oil”, my brother used to sigh every single time he caught me making myself a sandwich. “The za’atar will absorb all the oil and the bread will feel dry in your mouth”. Despite my eyes rolling to let him know how annoyed I was at the time, you will now never catch me putting my za’atar before my oil. I sometimes wonder why I do this. I would have loved to be stubborn and not give in to my brother’s know-it-all attitude, but deep down I know he’s right and I know he knows best. Now everytime I slather my pita bread with olive oil before I sprinkle my za’atar I feel like he’s going to sneak up behind me and congratulate me. In retrospect, I notice more and more this mimicking of behaviors and while I wonder where my habits and mannerisms come from, I like to make up stories about where others’ deepest darkest secrets come from as well. This can be referred to as the social proximity effect.

PROJECT STATEMENT

Through a work of introspection, I analyze myself in the lines of this phenomenon and showcase it in my animations. I chose four habits that

I picked up from four different family members, in a celebration of human connections and as a tribute to them and to the impact they had and still have on my life. The sound was purposely restricted to foley sound, straying away from language to offer a universal side to my project.

In an installation depicting the duality of internal and external, my aim is to create a space where, for a brief moment, people can feel like they are in my shoes. By being vulnerable in front of my audience, I hope to create an intimate experience that echoes my topics of story-telling, growing up, and mimicking behaviors.

"When I spend a lot of time with someone or make a new friend with distinctive speech patterns, I have found myself adopting those behaviors and speech patterns."

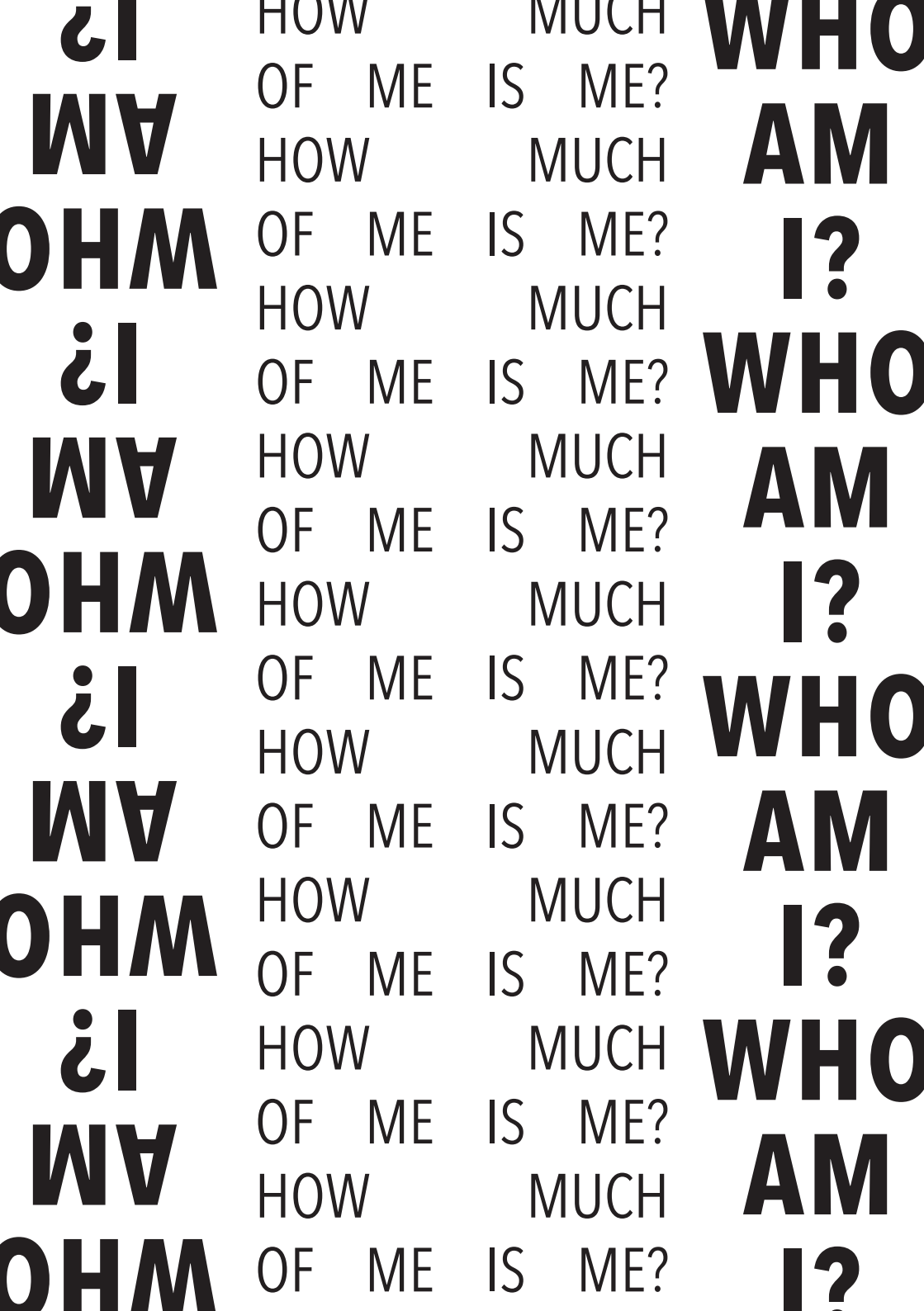
"I sometimes find myself reacting or laughing similarly to my parents. My mum and grandmother have a very similar laugh and sometimes I hear it in myself."

"I sometimes have thought about being a fraud, but I think we should be more focused on why we believe that then the reasons why we think we are so."

"People are heavily influenced by their environment, however the same environment could not be interpreted in the same way by two people. Hence, people are defined by their interpretation and reflection of the environment they surround themselves with"

"We need to understand that the individual is a mere illusion. The self doesn't exist farther than a constructed entity made up of a collective. So I guess we are all fraudulent."

SURVEY ANSWERS



WHO
AM
I?
HOW
OF
ME
IS
MUCH

WHO
AM
I?
HOW
OF
ME
IS
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WHO
AM
I?
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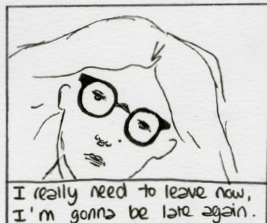
Mais malgré tout, je me dis parfois

Axelle Kurban

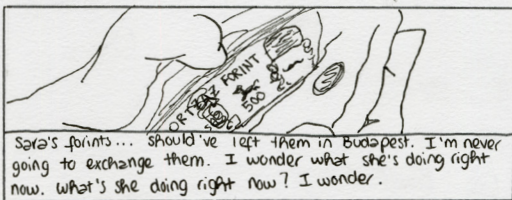
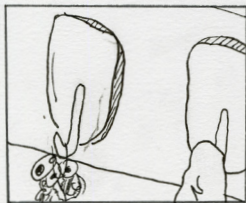


Miss miss
miss miss my
missing piece

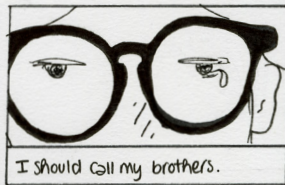
Miss miss
missing my
miss piece
missing



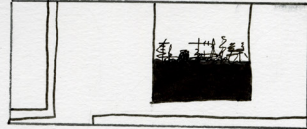
I really need to leave now,
I'm gonna be late again.



Sora's forints... should've left them in Budapest. I'm never
going to exchange them. I wonder what she's doing right
now. What's she doing right now? I wonder.



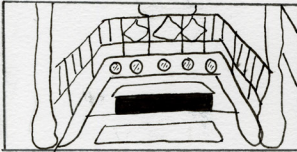
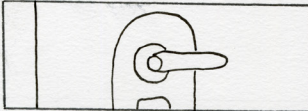
I should call my brothers.



Mais malgré tout je me dis parfois que t'siote.
Malgré-tout je t'sime ou je t'sime je t'sime malgré-tout.



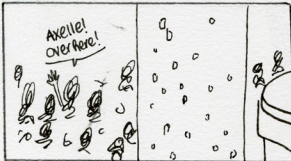
Mamina mamina mamina. I should call my mom.



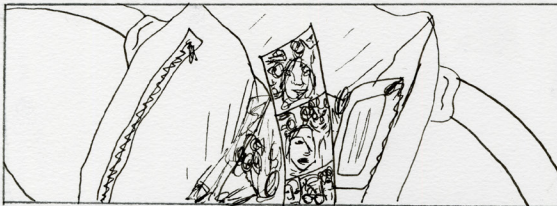
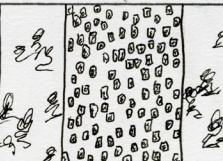
Why was I so intrigued by those security cameras when I was younger?
How sad. How weird. How sad and how weird.



Le rêve est la voie royale
de l'inconscient. I do not
remember any of my dreams.
I wonder what my old
philosophy teacher is doing
right now. Probably
philosophing.



I have noidea who these
people are and they have noidea
who I am. They are here and
I am here. I am here and they are
here. Why is it that passport pictures
are one's most objective visual
depiction and yet they are the
most universally dreaded ones.
They are here and I am here.



I miss you every day.
Silly siblings being
silly beings. Silly living
with silly beings: silly
living beings. I miss
you every day every day.
I miss you every day.

The social proximity effect is a humans and that manifests itself deeper manifestations in behavior is going to pick up habits and environment. This study anyhow relevant it is in our lives.

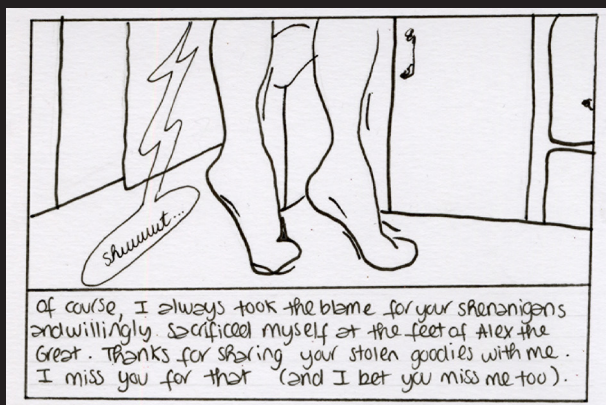
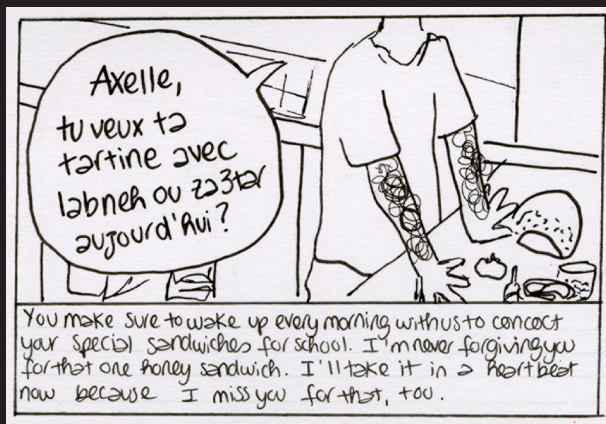
lead have been divided into definition and introduction of exploring the philosophical attempting to tackle the quest mankind. With the support of ed surveys, this paper treats encourage introspective works, man relationships, what we take to be. Discussing debates such course or hereditary and genetic depth the phenomenon in hopes to factors have on what makes up duality of the discourse aims to lens that is not-so-obvious and of our behaviors, and how we ourselves do we relate to each we are different, how some of me has some

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

phenomenon that lives within us from surface-level habits, to behavior. It briefly defends that one mannerisms from one's entourage analyzes this effect, and studies Support curated and analysis three main points, treating the the social proximity phenomenon, aspect of the subject, and finally tion of integrity that taunts philosophical takes and conduct- the subject in an effort to exploring and celebrating hu- from them and what they make us as the Nature vs Nurture dis- traits, this study explores in highlight the take that external our internal personas. The present human nature through a that testifies to the ambiguity present ourselves. We ask other, how we are the same, how has some of you, as some of you of me.



LOVE NOT FE



R E D U X

- 📍 Beirut: Elham
- 📍 Tabarja: Elie
- 📍 Zahlé: Salim
- 📍 Mtayleb: Karl



MY EMOTIONAL
LEBANON MAP



Karl, my brother, super passionate about cooking. Perhaps a bit too passionate. He's the reason I know I'm able to feed myself here in Paris.



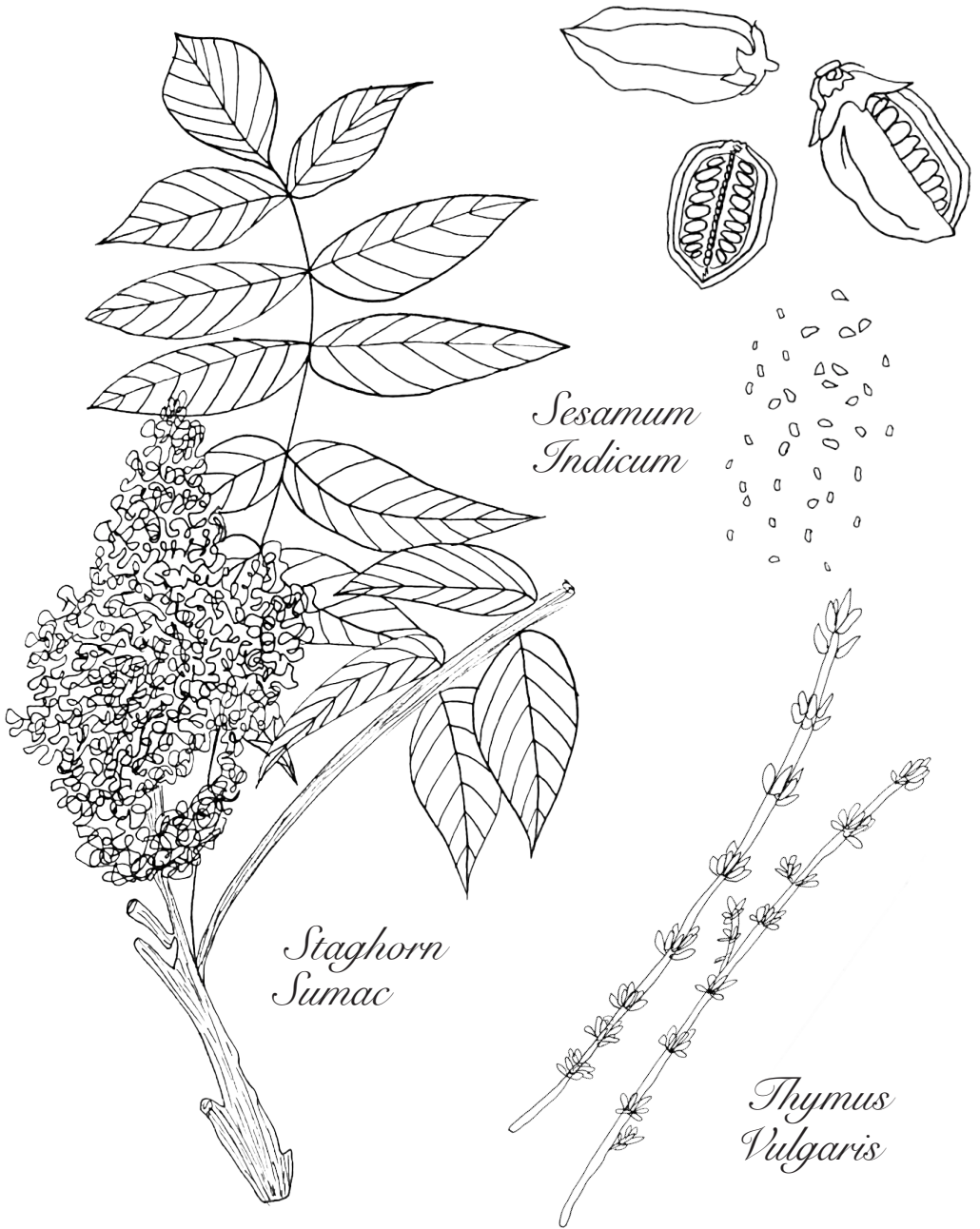
Salim, my grandfather, the king of tawle (backgammon). I'm his number one fan and proudly stand against my father during their intense duels.



Elie, my other grandfather, the famous mloukhieh composer. He is very fussy about the layering of his dish, so don't try to teach him how to do it - he'll just make fun of you.



Elham, my grandmother, says she hates drama but is all about that juicy neighbor gossip. Knocks on wood like there is no tomorrow.

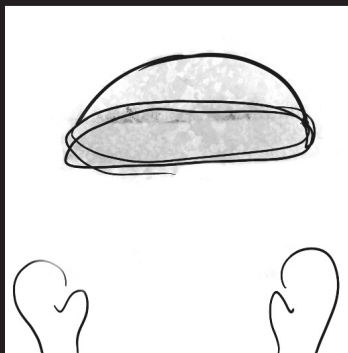
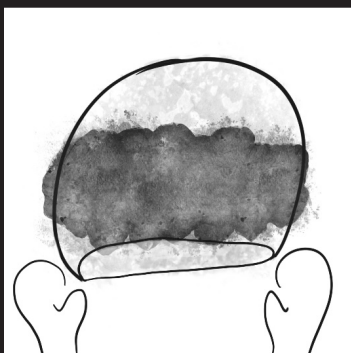
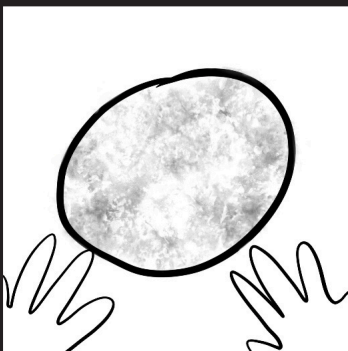
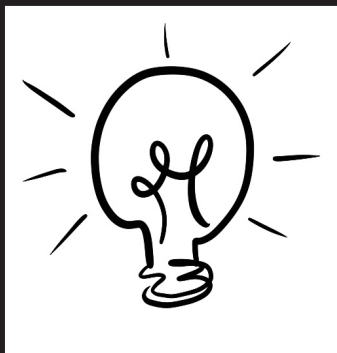


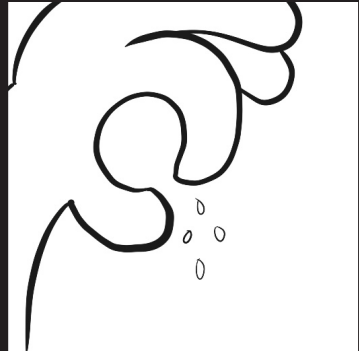
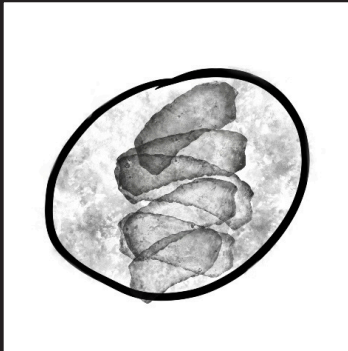
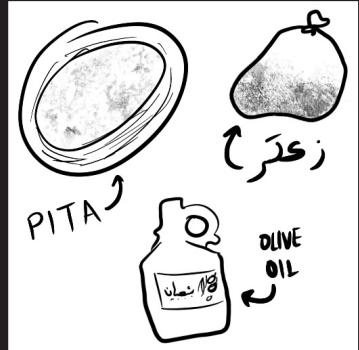
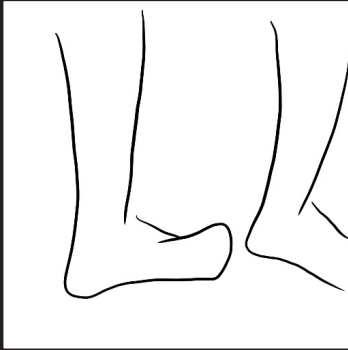
Za'atar Ingredients

KARL



EPISODE 1: ZA'ATAR





SALIM



Backgammon is a game for two players, played on a board consisting of twenty-four narrow triangles called points. The triangles alternate color and are grouped into four quadrants of six triangles each. Two quadrants are referred to as a player's home board and outer board, and the opponent's home board and outer board. The home and outer boards are separated from each other by a ridge down the center of the board called the bar.

The object of the game is move all your checkers into your own home board and then bear them off. The first player to bear off all of his checkers wins the game.

The dice roll determines how many points the player is supposed to move his checker. The checker always moves forward following the horseshoe path towards the player's home board.

A point that is not occupied by two or more opposing checkers is an open point. When moving a checker it may land only on an open point. The two dice constitute two separate movements. For example, if a player rolls a 6 and a 4, he may move one checker 6 spaces to an open point and another checker 4 spaces to an open point.

A player may also choose to move the same checker twice, as long as each move is on to an open point.

When a double is rolled the numbers on the dice are played twice. For example, if a player rolls two fives, he may move his checkers five points, four times in any combination landing on open points.

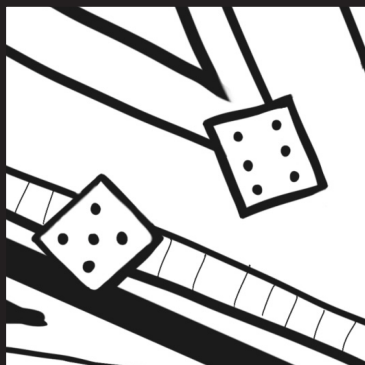
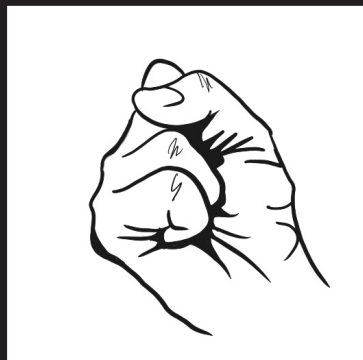
A player must move both numbers rolled if possible (four numbers possible is rolled). If only one of the numbers can be played because only one open point is available, the player must play that number. If neither number can be played but not both, then the larger number must be played. If neither number can be played then the player loses his turn. If a player cannot play all four numbers in the case of a double, the player must play as many numbers as possible.

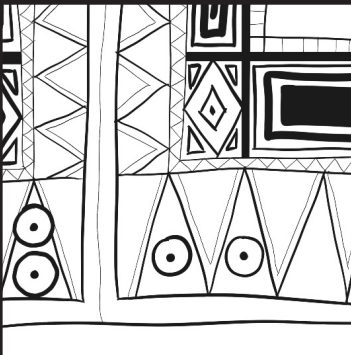
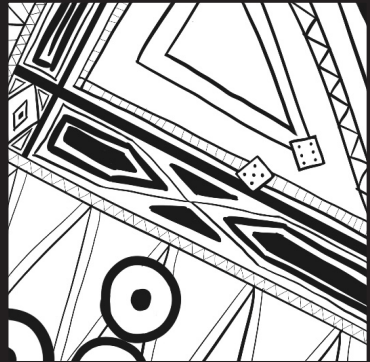
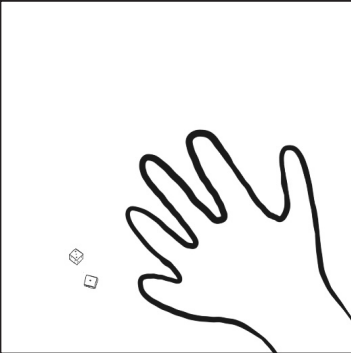
An open point containing one opposing checker is a blot. When a checker is moved onto a blot, the blot is hit, and the opposing checker that has been hit is placed on the bar.

When a player has one or more checkers on the bar he must first bear them off onto the opponent's home board. A checker enters by rolling two dice and moving it to the corresponding point of one of the numbers on the opponent's home board.

If the checker(s) on the bar cannot enter into an open point, the player loses his turn and the checker(s) remains on the bar. A player cannot move any other piece until all his checkers are off the bar. If a player is able to enter some but not all of his checkers off the bar, his turn is finished. If a player's checker(s) have been moved

EPISODE 2: TRIC TRAC

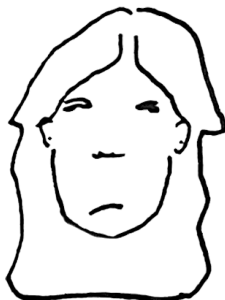
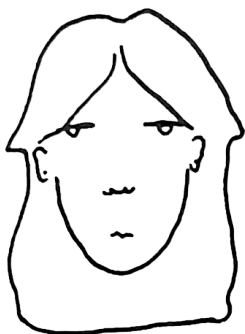




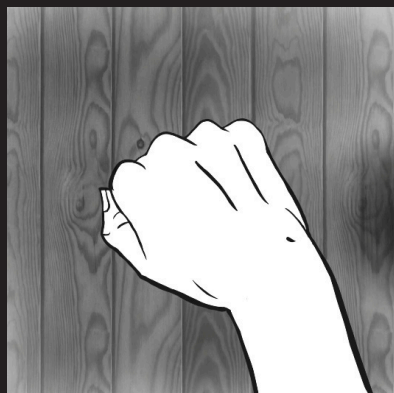
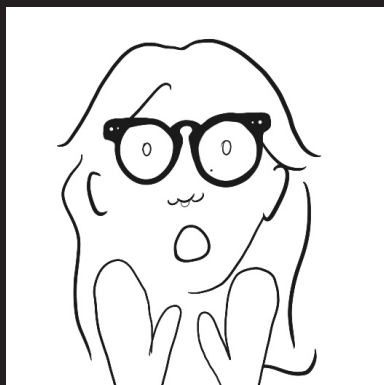


The evil eye is a quasi-universal symbol of protection. It is a supernatural belief in a curse, brought about by a malevolent glare, usually given to a person when one is unaware. It is found in many cultures in the Mediterranean region, with such cultures often believing that receiving the evil eye will cause misfortune or injury. The perception of the nature of the phenomenon, its causes, and possible protective measures, varies between tribes and cultures. Of the multiple ways to 'break' this curse, one is believed to have to knock on wood to get rid of said evil eye.

ELHAM



EPISODE 3: WOOD

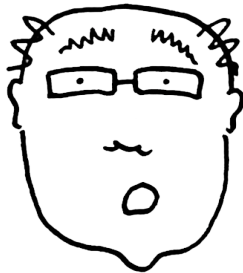




The sound is cartoonish to encapsulate the childish essence of the memories. I played with the textures, lengths and details or lack thereof in an attempt to mirror my personal memory.

The four animations are meant to be played simultaneously, with overlapping sound, in order to create an environment where one has to focus on each in order to understand it.

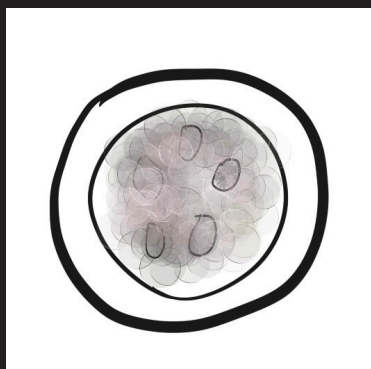
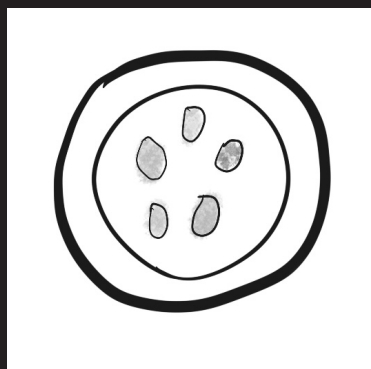
ELIE

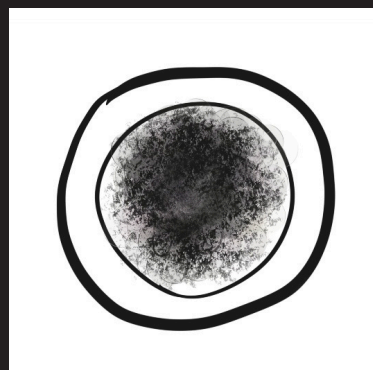
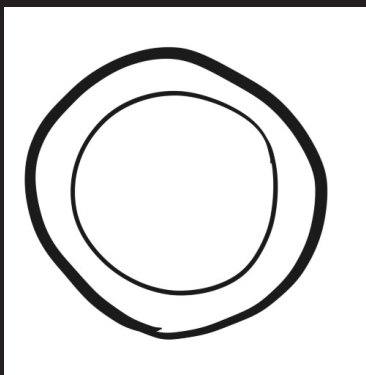
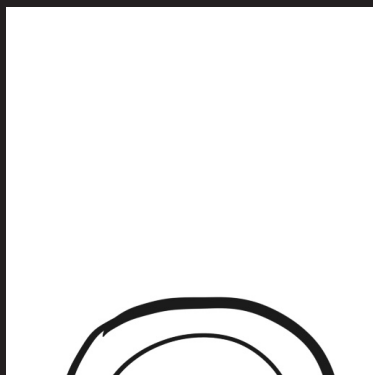


MLOUKHIEH — ملح دق

1. In a medium-sized pot, heat 1 tbsp. of olive oil. Season chicken breast w/ 1 tsp. of salt + black pepper. Cook over high heat for about 2 mins. / side. Add bay leaves, cloves, onions, salt, 6 cups of water. Cook on high heat until boiling, then lower heat to medium + cook until chicken has cooked through (abt. 20-30 mins). Set chicken aside to cool + shred when cooled.
2. Add 10 cups of the dried mloukhiyah leaves to a large mixing bowl. Remove any stems or brown / yellow leaves. Heat up kettle of water until just boiling, and pour over the leaves to re-hydrate them. Let soak for at least 5 mins. Drain the water and pour the leaves into a colander over the bowl.
3. Pour water over the leaves in the colander and swirl around with hands. Drain water and squeeze mloukhiyah. Repeat until water runs clear and mloukhiyah is no longer slimy (abt. 20 w).
4. Wash fresh cilantro, cut off stems. Finely chop + set aside.
5. Peel garlic + cut in halves / thirds (put 5 cloves aside). Place in a mortar + tsp. salt. Crush garlic.

EPISODE 4: MLOUKHIEH





Thank you
Thank you for the laughs
Thank you for the tears
Thank you for the lessons
Thank you for the jokes
Thank you for the resilience
Thank you for the comfort
Thank you for the challenges
Thank you for the stories
Thank you for you
Thank you
Thank you for me

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

Thank you

With Love,

AXELLE